

Important Medieval Trade Routes

3. In Northern Germany, *Bremen, Hamburg, Lübeck*, and other north German cities controlled trade in the Baltic and North seas. In the 13th century these cities organized the *Hanseatic League*. In the 14th century, at the height of its power, the League included the German cities plus other north European cities. To promote the commercial interests of its members, the League (a) drove pirates from the northern seas, (b) banned non-League cities from trading in the area, and (c) maintained regulations for fair trade. The Hanse cities dealt chiefly in timber, grain, iron, leather, and salted fish.

### TRADE FAIRS IN MEDIEVAL TOWNS

To foster trade, the Flemish cities, and later other northern European cities, sponsored fairs. These exhibitions, common by 1200, attracted (1) buyers and sellers of goods, (2) merchants from distant places who exchanged information and introduced new ideas, (3) entertainers who provided fun and frolic, and (4) ordinary people who welcomed the relief from monotony.

### THE GUILDS IN MEDIEVAL TOWNS

1. **Merchant Guilds.** These associations of merchants within the town regulated *trade*. They (a) taxed nonmember merchants to discourage competition, (b) encouraged fair business practices, such as honest weights and measures, exact quality standards, and uniform prices, (c) participated actively in town government, and (d) functioned as social clubs.

2. **Craft Guilds.** These associations of skilled craftspeople within the town regulated *industry*. A separate guild existed for each craft, or occupation, such as bakers, candlemakers, weavers, tailors, and carpenters. The craft guilds undertook economic, educational, political, and social activities.

a. **Economic Activities.** The craft guilds answered the basic economic questions of what was to be produced and how it should be produced. They established wages and hours, quality of materials, standards of workmanship, production quotas, and prices. The guilds endeavored to give both producer and consumer a fair price called a *just price*.

b. **Educational Activities.** The craft guilds strictly regulated the training and advancement of workers. (1) The *apprentice*, or beginning worker, bound himself generally without pay and for a seven-year period, to a master craftsman. The master supported him and taught him the craft, social manners, and morals. After this period, the apprentice might be promoted to the journeyman class. (2) The *journeyman*, or intermediate worker, could be employed in any shop in return for a daily wage. If he passed a test by producing a "masterpiece," he advanced to the master class. (3) The *master craftsman* could open his own shop, where he was both worker and owner.

c. **Political and Social Activities.** The craft guilds (1) were active in town government, (2) supported hospitals and provided special benefits for widows, orphans, and the sick, and (3) arranged holiday entertainment.

In summary, the craft guilds combined features of our modern labor unions, employer associations, political parties, and mutual aid societies.

### LIFE IN MEDIEVAL TOWNS

1. **Disadvantages.** (a) Town streets were narrow, unpaved, unlighted, and unguarded. A citizen out alone at night faced danger. (b) Most town buildings were dark, dingy, constructed of wood, and close together. Fires spread rapidly from building to building. (c) Town walls, although providing protection against pirates, highway robbers, and feudal lords, prevented the town's physical expansion. (d) Town sanitation scarcely existed. Inhabitants dumped garbage into streets or nearby rivers, causing pollution. Towns suffered greatly from epidemics and plagues. The *Black Death* (1347-1350), a contagious and deadly bubonic plague, alone killed about one-third of western Europe's population.

2. **Advantages.** In the Later Middle Ages, the towns attracted able and enter-

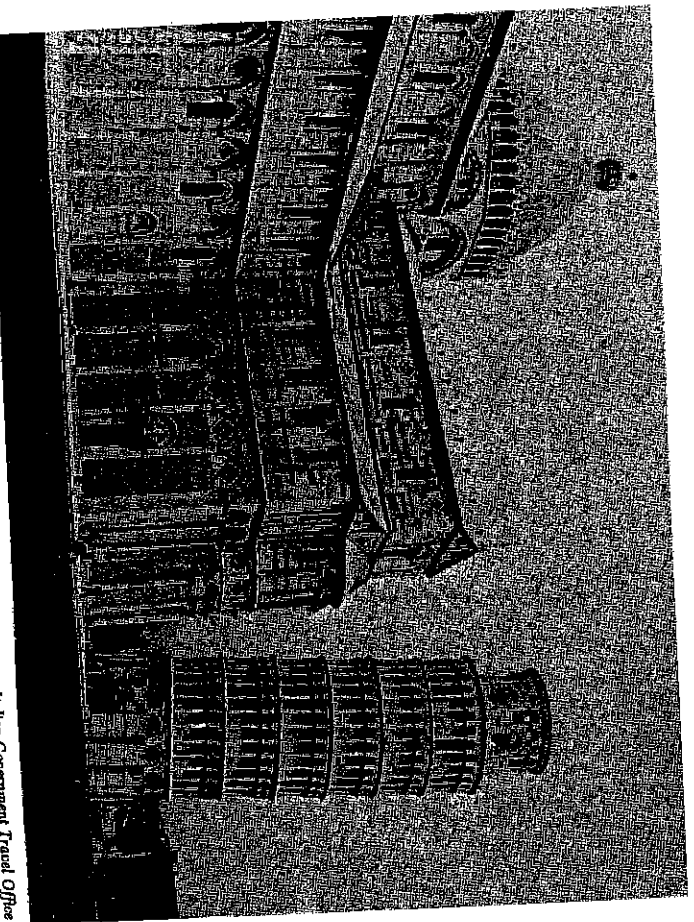
prising persons, mainly from the lower class of the rural communities. Towns offered (a) freedom from feudal restrictions, (b) a fuller, richer, more varied life than at the manor, (c) cultural and educational facilities, and (d) opportunities for economic advancement.

## CULTURAL ACHIEVEMENTS OF WESTERN EUROPE DURING THE MIDDLE AGES

In the Dark Ages (Early Middle Ages), western European culture retrogressed as a result of barbarian invasions, feudalism, and people's concern for the barest essentials of life. In the Later Middle Ages, western European culture began to progress because (1) the Catholic Church provided leadership and support, (2) the Crusades spread knowledge of the advanced Byzantine and Moslem civilizations, and (3) the towns provided centers of culture and learning.

1. **Architecture.** Medieval people expressed their intensely religious spirit by constructing awe-inspiring cathedrals.

a. **Romanesque Style.** Before the 12th century, architects designed cathedrals in the massive *Romanesque* style, derived from ancient Rome. This style featured thick walls, few windows, rounded arches, and strong columns. A famous example is the Cathedral in Pisa, Italy.

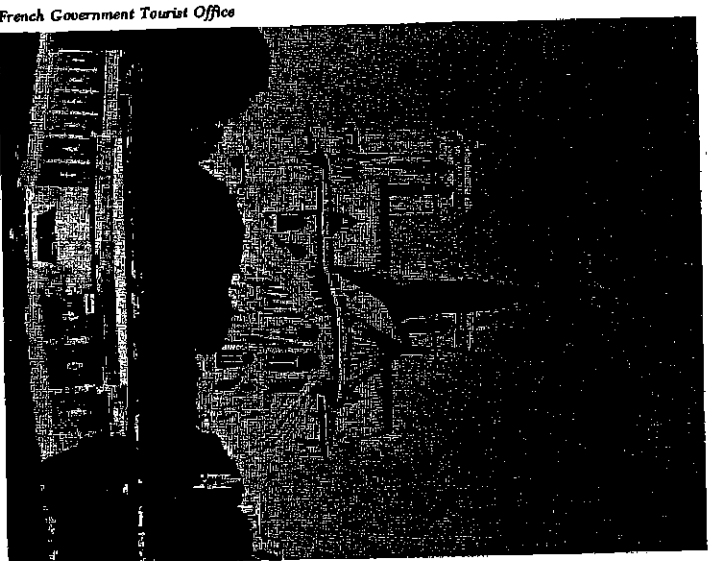


Italian Government Travel Office

Romanesque Architecture: The Cathedral and the "Leaning Tower" in Pisa.

## 100 / WORLD HISTORY

b. **Gothic Style.** Starting in the 12th century, architects employed the more graceful *Gothic* style. It utilized thin walls, flying buttresses, pointed arches, tall spires, gargoyles, and many stained-glass windows. Gothic architecture permitted more sunlight to enter the building. Some notable Gothic cathedrals are *Notre Dame* in Paris and *Westminster Abbey* in London.



French Government Tourist Office

Gothic Architecture:  
The Cathedral of Notre Dame  
in Paris.

2. **Higher Education.** In the 11th and 12th centuries, scholars founded many important universities: in France, the University of Paris; in Italy, the universities of Bologna and Salerno; in England, the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Medieval universities taught geometry, astronomy, music, grammar, and logic—the basis of our modern liberal arts education. Students were prepared for careers in theology (religion), philosophy, law, and medicine. Except in religion, the universities relied chiefly on the writings of the ancient Greek scholar Aristotle.

University students faced difficulties because they (a) were taught, not in their own tongue, but in the Church language, *Latin*, and (b) lacked books, libraries, laboratories, and comfortable classrooms.

3. **Science and Invention.** Medieval scientists were, in our modern sense, quite unscientific. They rarely experimented or questioned, mainly accepting popular superstitions and the ideas of Aristotle.